

The Price of Subversion

Ex-CIA Agent Reveals the Truth About the U.S. in Angola

BY JON STEINBERG

"My CIA recruiters lied to me about the clandestine services as they swore me in," says John Stockwell explaining why he wrote *In Search of Enemies*, published May 8. "They insisted the CIA functioned to gather intelligence. It did not kill, use drugs or damage people's lives, they assured me. These lies were perpetuated in the following year of training courses. It was not until the disclosures of the Church and Pike Committees in 1975 that I learned the full, shocking truth about my employers."

Though he felt increasingly uncomfortable with these truths, Stockwell continued to serve the agency which had lied to him. To his surprise, he was given a high position in the CIA's Angola operation. This time he went with his eyes open.

The CIA Stockwell describes combines the politics of Machiavelli, the efficiency of the Keystone Kops and the generosity of the fat boy on the block who wants to be liked and has a big allowance.

During his early days with FEATURE, as the Angola project was code-named, Stockwell was amazed to discover from one of the CIA's top experts on Southern Africa that "The Soviets did not make the first move on Angola. Other people did. The Chinese and the United States. The Soviets have been a half-step behind, countering our moves."

Once FEATURE was set in motion, those involved scurried in every direction to keep it secret from Congress and the public. Some were figuring out how to enter Angola unobserved while others were trading weapons to Israel in exchange for captured Soviet arms which could cover American tracks. Some were supplying Holden Roberto's FNLA with boots and guns when it had almost no troops to use them, while others were writing propaganda for Jonas Savimbi's UNITA forces, fabricating explicit and imaginary details of rape and pillage by Cuban troops.

President Carter's attack on Cuban policy in Africa as an attempt "to subvert other people through military means" carries far less weight after Stockwell's account, which shows that the Cubans arrived in Africa in large



Helen Marcus
Ex-CIA agent John Stockwell (standing on edge of road) with FNLA commanders and a Brazilian major (squatting).

numbers for the first time only after the South African invasion and CIA-supported offensives seriously threatened the MPLA.

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Stockwell does not know if the American government was directly involved in the South African decision to invade. Prime Minister Vorster, among others, has strongly hinted it was. Stockwell says that "the CIA has traditionally sympathized with South Africa and enjoyed a close liaison with BOSS," its secret police, to the extent that there is no independent American intelligence operation in South Africa. The Americans also discussed Angola with French intelligence agents, who fleeced the CIA, providing a mercenary recruiter who conned the Americans out of taxpayers' dollars, while at the same time conducting their own operations in Angola without informing the CIA.

Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko, long on the CIA gift list, helped out as well, supplying troops and transport in exchange for lavish sums. FEATURE

agents thought him not only greedy but singularly ungrateful; after all, Stockwell reveals, the U.S. was fighting the MPLA partly because of old ally Mobutu's persistent requests. (The CIA had been involved in the murder of his rival Patrice Lumumba in 1961. Stockwell also confirms the widespread charge that the CIA had a role in the overthrow of President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana.)

How many other plots, assassinations, coups and wars has the CIA been involved in? We may never know. Stockwell explains that all the damning information is kept in "soft" files. They are not registered in official records and are therefore immune from leaks via the Freedom of Information Act, Congressional committees and even, if need be, the President—assuming the President and Congress want to know. As Stockwell points out in his introduction, the slap on the wrist given former CIA Director Richard Helms for perjuring himself before a Senate committee is, in effect, official approval of the CIA's right to lie to the government and the American people. Influential publications such as *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post* support this policy wholeheartedly. Richard Harris shows in his eloquent examination of the Helms case in April 10 *New Yorker*.

John Stockwell is no radical. Like any organization he served for 12 years, he would still unhesitatingly squeeze a tube of toothpaste from the top. He is convinced that the war in Angola would have been won if the CIA's allies had been given a couple of helicopter ships. He doesn't wonder why the Zaire and FNLA troops raped and pillaged while the Cubans and MPLA didn't. He probably wouldn't understand why no surprise that the week his book was released, the South African army again invaded Angola and slaughtered nearly 600 unarmed Namibian refugees, many of them children.

Stockwell does know that the CIA is uncontrolled, unaccountable and a threat to confusing its own security that of the American people. The Roosevelt learned the lesson too late: that if a powerful Praetorian Guard is created to protect the emperor it may eventually choose its own occupant for the throne.